

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ES.1 INTRODUCTION

The BLM Moab (Utah) Field Office (Moab FO) is revising its current land use plan, the Grand Resource Area Resource Management Plan (RMP), which was signed in 1985. The new plan revision, which is to be called the Moab RMP, and its accompanying Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), would provide the management direction for public lands within the boundaries of the Moab FO. The newly revised RMP covers the same area as did the 1985 RMP, which is all of Grand County and the northern third of San Juan County (BLM 1985). The Moab FO planning area (MPA) comprises approximately 2,756,065 acres of land, of which approximately 1,822,562 acres is public land administered by the BLM. Due to its easier access, the BLM Vernal FO presently manages a small amount of public land at the top of the Book Cliffs along the northern portion of the MPA.

The MPA is situated in the canyon, plateau, and desert areas of the Colorado Plateau Physiographic Province. Geographically, the Moab FO is bounded by the Bookcliffs to the north, the Utah-Colorado state line to the east, Harts Point and Lisbon Valley to the south, and the Green River to the west. Major waterways within the planning area include the Colorado River, the Dolores River, and the Green River. Elevations within the planning area range from approximately 13,000 feet above mean sea level in the La Sal Mountains to approximately 3,900 feet above mean sea level at Mineral Bottom along the Green River.

The planning area encompasses Arches National Park, Dead Horse Point State Park, and the La Sal Mountains of the Manti-La Sal National Forest. The Moab FO shares boundaries with lands administered by the BLM Vernal, Monticello, Grand Junction, Uncompahgre, Dolores, and Price FOs, as well as with the Uintah/Ouray Indian Reservation and Canyonlands National Park.

ES.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

ES.2.1 PURPOSE

FLPMA requires that the BLM "develop, maintain, and when appropriate, revise land use plans" (43 United States Code [U.S.C.] 1712 [a]). The BLM has determined it is necessary to revise existing land use plans (LUP) and prepare a new RMP for the MPA based on a number of new issues that have arisen since preparation of the existing plans. In general, the purpose of this RMP is to provide a comprehensive framework for BLM's management of the public lands within the MPA and its allocation of resources pursuant to the multiple-use and sustained yield mandate of FLPMA. In addition, the purpose of this plan revision is to:

- Consolidate the existing LUP and its amendments.
- Reevaluate, with public involvement, existing conditions, resources, and uses, and reconsider the mix of resource allocations and management decisions designed to balance uses and the protection of resources pursuant to FLPMA and applicable law.
- Resolve multiple-use conflicts or issues between resource values and resource uses. The resulting Moab RMP will establish consolidated guidance and updated goals, objectives, and management actions for the public lands in the decision area. The RMP will be

comprehensive in nature and will address issues that have been identified through agency, interagency, and public scoping efforts.

- Disclose and assess the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the reasonably foreseeable future actions resulting from the management actions in each alternative pursuant to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), its implementing regulations, and other applicable laws.

ES.2.2 NEED

A revision to the 1985 RMP is necessary because there have been significant alterations in the MPA in light of new information and changed resources, circumstances, and policies that may be relevant to the future management of public lands and allocation of resources under the multiple-use and sustained yield mandate. This determination is further corroborated by a Special Evaluation Report, completed in 2002 by the MFO, which concluded that some of the decisions within the 1985 RMP are in need of revision.

There have been changes in the laws, policies, and regulations that direct the management of the resources on MPA public lands. There has also been an increase in the amount of new information and resource data that need to be considered to better manage the public lands. Population in and visitation to the region have grown, and population demographics have changed, as have public awareness and use of lands within the MPA. Specifically, there may be a need to evaluate management prescriptions and resource allocations to address the increases in recreation and visitor use, including scenic quality and open spaces, as well as the increased interest in oil and gas development. Land use plan decisions may be changed only through the amendment or revision process.

ES.3 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public scoping is a process designed to meet the public involvement requirements of FLPMA and NEPA. This cooperative process includes soliciting input from interested agencies (federal, state and local), organizations, and individuals on issues, concerns, needs, resource uses, resource development, and resource protection. The scoping process is an excellent method for opening dialogue between the lead agency and the general public about management of the public lands and for evaluating the concerns of those who have an interest in the area.

As part of the scoping process, the BLM also requested the public to submit nominations for potential Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) and nominations of rivers for potential inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The scoping period for the Moab RMP began on June 4, 2003 and ended on January 31, 2004. Scoping included scheduled open houses in 6 communities (Green River, Moab, Monticello, Blanding, and Salt Lake City, Utah, and Grand Junction, Colorado), and visitations to 12 locations throughout the planning area by BLM personnel. In addition, news releases and radio announcements were used to notify the public regarding the scoping period and the planning process and to invite the public to provide written comments. Comments obtained from the public during the scoping period were used to define the relevant issues that would be resolved by a broad range of alternative management actions.

ES.4 PLANNING ISSUES

As noted above, issues to be addressed in the RMP were identified by the public and the agencies during the scoping process for the Moab RMP. The Final Scoping Summary (available for review on the Moab planning web page at www.blm.gov/rmp/ut/moab), prepared in conjunction with this RMP, summarizes the scoping process. The issues identified in the Scoping Report fall into one of 10 broad categories (see below). Other resource and use issues are identified in the BLM Planning Handbook and Manual (H1610-1). All of the following issues were considered in developing the alternatives brought forward in this RMP.

ISSUE 1. –RECREATION USE AND OHVs

How can increased recreation use, especially motorized vehicle use, be managed while protecting natural resource values?

ISSUE 2. –MINERALS

What areas will be available for mineral development, and what restrictions should be imposed?

ISSUE 3. –SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

What areas should have special designations such as ACECs and Wild and Scenic Rivers?

ISSUE 4. –ECOSYSTEM RESOURCES

How can resources such as watersheds, wildlife, and vegetation be protected, maintained, or restored?

ISSUE 5. –LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

Are there areas where grazing should not be allowed due to resource conflicts?

ISSUE 6. –RIPARIAN AND WETLAND AREAS

How can riparian/wetland areas be managed to protect, maintain, and restore their proper functioning condition?

ISSUE 7. –CULTURAL AND PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

How can cultural and paleontological resources be protected from the predicted influx in visitation as well as from impacts from other resource uses (e.g., motorized recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development)?

ISSUE 8. –LAND TENURE ADJUSTMENTS AND WITHDRAWALS

What lands within the planning area should be identified as targets for acquisition, disposal or withdrawal?

ISSUE 9. –FIRE MANAGEMENT

Where is fire desired and not desired, and in what areas could fire be utilized as a management tool for vegetative treatments?

ISSUE 10. –NON-WSA LANDS WITH WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

How should non-WSA lands with wilderness characteristics be managed?

ES.5 ALTERNATIVES

Some of the decisions in this Draft RMP/EIS are carried forward from the existing Grand RMP (BLM 1985) because there are no impending issues associated with them, and they do not need to change. These decisions are common to all alternatives because a range of alternative decisions is not necessary for these resources or uses. Other decisions are common to all action alternatives (Alternatives B, C, and D), but are different from the No Action Alternative (A) due to a change in circumstances. Eleven Wilderness Study Areas (348,815 acres) and one Wilderness Area (5,200 acres) would remain under all alternatives. An overview of some specific components of each alternative of this RMP is provided below. A full discussion of each alternative is provided in Chapter 2.

ES.5.1 ALTERNATIVE A- NO ACTION

Alternative A would be a continuation of existing management under the current Grand Resource Area Management Plan (1985) as amended.

Under Alternative A, 620,212 acres would be open to cross country OHV use, 5,062 acres would be closed, and OHV use would be limited to either designated or existing routes in the remainder of the planning area (Table ES1). Approximately 4,673 miles of travel routes would be designated (Table ES2). Under Alternative A, three Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) would be designated to manage extensively-used recreation areas, but no Focus Areas for particular types of recreation would be established (Table ES3).

No Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) would be designated under this alternative, and no decisions would be made to recommend 12 eligible rivers as suitable for Wild and Scenic River (WSR) designation (Table ES4). No non-WSA areas would be managed to maintain their wilderness characteristics (Table ES5). About 353,293 acres would be closed to oil and gas leasing. About 38,912 acres would be managed with no surface occupancy (NSO) stipulations, and 1,038,344 acres would be open with standard stipulations (Table ES6). The remaining 389,605 acres would be managed with timing limitation or controlled surface use stipulations.

ES.5.2 ALTERNATIVE B

Alternative B would offer more protection for wildlife and other natural resources, and favor natural systems over commodities development. It would emphasize the protection of natural resources and landscapes as well as non-motorized recreation.

Under Alternative B, zero acres would be open to cross country OHV use, 347,424 acres would be closed, and OHV use would be limited to designated routes in the remainder of the planning area (Table ES1). Approximately 2,144 miles of travel routes would be designated (Table ES2). Under Alternative B, eleven SRMAs would be designated, and 22 Focus Areas for particular types of recreation would be established (Table ES3).

Fourteen ACECs would be designated under this alternative, and 28 segments of 12 eligible rivers would be recommended as suitable for WSR designation (Table ES4). Approximately 266,485 acres of non-WSA lands (in 32 areas) would be managed to maintain their wilderness characteristics (Table ES5). About 671,444 acres would be closed to oil and gas leasing. About 342,931 acres would be managed with no surface occupancy (NSO) stipulations, and 264,344 acres would be open with standard stipulations (Table ES6). The remaining 543,751 acres would be managed with timing limitation or controlled surface use stipulations.

ES.5.3 ALTERNATIVE C- PREFERRED

Alternative C (Preferred Alternative) would protect important environmental values and sensitive resources while allowing for commodities development. It would provide a balance between protection of important natural resources and commodity production, as well as offer a full range of recreation opportunities.

Under Alternative C, 1,866 acres would be open to cross country OHV use, 339,298 acres would be closed, and OHV use would be limited to designated routes in the remainder of the planning area (Table ES1). Approximately 2,642 miles of travel routes (including motorcycle trails) would be designated (Table ES2). Under Alternative C, ten SRMAs would be designated, and 30 Focus Areas for both motorized and non-motorized recreation would be established (Table ES3).

Five ACECs would be designated under this alternative, and 10 segments of 3 eligible rivers would be recommended as suitable for WSR designation (Table ES4). Approximately 47,761 acres of non-WSA lands (in 3 areas) would be managed to maintain their wilderness characteristics (Table ES5). About 370,250 acres would be closed to oil and gas leasing. About 217,480 acres would be managed with NSO stipulations, and 427,273 acres would be open with standard stipulations (Table ES6). The remaining 806,994 acres would be managed with timing limitation or controlled surface use stipulations.

ES.5.4 ALTERNATIVE D

Alternative D would emphasize commodity development over the protection of natural resources, and would emphasize motorized recreation.

Under Alternative D, 3,064 acres would be open to cross country OHV use, 57,351 acres would be closed, and OHV use would be limited to designated routes in the remainder of the planning area (Table ES1). Approximately 2,890 miles of travel routes (including motorcycle trails) would be designated (Table ES2). Under Alternative D, 6 SRMAs would be designated, and 10 Focus Areas for various types of recreation would be established (Table ES3).

No ACECs would be designated under this alternative, and no river segments would be recommended as suitable for WSR designation (Table ES4). No non-WSA lands would be managed to maintain their wilderness characteristics (Table ES5). A total of 350,219 acres would be closed to oil and gas leasing. About 84,772 acres would be managed with NSO stipulations, and 797,031 acres would be open with standard stipulations (Table ES6). The remaining 590,442 acres would be managed with timing limitation or controlled surface use stipulations.

Table ES1. OHV Categories (acres) by Alternative

Category	Alt A No Action	Alt B	Alt C Preferred	Alt D
Closed	5,062	347,424	339,298	57,351
Limited to Existing	1,196,920 ¹	0	0	0
Limited to Designated	0	1,475,074	1,481,334	1,762,083
Open	620,212	0	1,866	3,064

¹ 48,169 acres would be limited to designated roads and trails; and 309,749 acres would be limited to inventoried routes in WSAs.

Table ES2. Designated Routes

Item	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D
D Routes ¹	4,673	2,144	2,519	2,671
Motorcycle Trails	0	0	123	219

¹ At time of publication.

Table ES3. SRMAs and Focus Areas

Category	Alt A (ac)	Alt B (ac)	Alt C (ac)	Alt D (ac)
SRMAs	3 (141,234)	11 (976,173)	10 (658,642)	6 (277,471)
Focus Areas	0	22	30	10

SRMAs are established to manage intensively used recreation areas and generally do not restrict other uses.

Focus Areas are Recreation Management Zones within SRMAs for emphasizing particular types of recreation activities.

In Alternative B, non-motorized recreation is emphasized.

In Alternative C (preferred), opportunities for both non-motorized and motorized recreation are provided.

In Alternative D, motorized recreation is emphasized.

Table ES4. Special Designations

		Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D
Wilderness Study Areas	number	11			
	acres	348,815			
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	number	0	14	5	0
	acres	0	609,687	63,232	0
Wild and Scenic Rivers	Eligible Rivers	12	12	3	12
	Suitable Segments	deferred	28	10	0

Table ES5. Non-WSA Areas Managed for Wilderness Characteristics

	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D
Units (#)	0	32	3	0
Acres	0	266,485	47,761	0

Table ES6. Oil and Gas Leasing Stipulations

Stipulation	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D
Standard	1,038,344	264,344	427,273	797,031
TL and CSU	389,605	543,751	806,994	590,442
NSO	38,912	342,931	217,480	84,772
Closed	353,293	671,444	370,250	350,219
Projected No. of wells/LOP	451	255	432	448

Oil and gas stipulations would apply to other surface disturbing activities where they are not contrary to laws, regulations, or policy.

The following stipulations would be applied to land use authorizations: 1) standard stipulations, 2) timing limitations (TL), 3) controlled surface use (CSU), and 4) no surface occupancy (NSO). Areas identified as closed would not be available for oil and gas leasing.

Areas identified as NSO and closed would be avoidance and exclusion areas for rights-of-way, respectively. NSO and closed areas may be recommended for withdrawal of locatable minerals in the future if it is determined that unacceptable resource conflicts are occurring.

ES.6 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Moab FO is internationally renowned for both its scenic quality and its recreational opportunities, which are the primary land use in the planning area. Approximately 2 million visitors per year enjoy the diverse and varied recreational opportunities of the planning area and form the basis for Grand County's tourism-based economy. Recreational opportunities include scenic driving, mountain biking, hiking, rafting and boating, rock climbing, riding off-highway vehicles (OHVs), and horseback riding. The many trail-based recreational activities in the planning area are highly dependent upon route systems.

Mineral exploration and development are another major use of public lands in the MPA. Oil and gas exploration and production has occurred within the planning area continually for the past 100 years. Production of oil and gas is currently taking place in Greater Cisco and the eastern Book Cliffs, in Lisbon Valley, and on Big Flat. Another current mineral activity in the planning area is copper development; a large commercial copper deposit in Lisbon Valley is currently under production. Uranium deposits can be found throughout the southern half of the planning area. With the recent rise in uranium prices, there has been renewed interest in exploration and development of the deposits in the Moab FO. Other mineral deposits within the planning area include potash, coal, placer gold, limestone, building stone, travertine, humate, sand and gravel, and clay.

Other land uses within the planning area include rights-of-way (ROWs) for roads, pipelines, powerlines, and communication sites, film permits, and livestock grazing.

Many important natural and cultural resources are found in the MPA. A number of federally listed wildlife species inhabit the planning area, including the Mexican spotted owl, southwestern willow flycatcher, Colorado pikeminnow, humpback chub, bonytail chub, bald eagle, and peregrine falcon. The planning area also contains habitat for mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep (both desert and Rocky Mountain), and pronghorn. Prehistoric sites of Anasazi and Fremont cultures are known to be in the planning area, as are later historic sites of cultural significance.

ES.7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Selection of Alternative A, the No Action Alternative, would maintain the current rate of progress in meeting land health standards and protecting resource values. It would allow for use levels to mostly continue at current levels in the same places in the planning area, with adjustments required in order to meet Standards for Rangeland Health or to mitigate resource concerns in compliance with existing laws and regulations.

Alternative B would have the least potential to adversely impact physical and biological resources and would protect a variety of vegetation types and wildlife habitats. Alternative B would be the most restrictive to resource extraction. Consequently, Alternative B would have the greatest potential for short-term adverse impacts to local economies and businesses that depend on public land for resource extraction.

Implementation of Alternative C would allow for many uses to continue but would constrain certain activities in order to maintain or protect important natural resources. This could result in some short-term adverse impacts to local economies and resource extraction businesses, but long-term economic benefits would be gained from the emphasis on a diversity of recreational activities.

Alternative D offers the greatest potential benefits to the local economy from resource extraction, although economic benefits from recreation use would not be maximized. Resource extraction uses would generally be least encumbered by management decisions under this alternative. Alternative D would result in greater impacts on the physical and biological environment than actions proposed under Alternatives B or C.

See Table 2.2 at the end of Chapter 2 for a summary of potential impacts by alternative. Detailed descriptions of impacts of the four alternatives are provided in Chapter 4, along with a discussion of the cumulative impacts, irretrievable and irreversible commitments of resources, and unavoidable adverse impacts of the alternatives.

ES.8 PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative C was selected as the preferred alternative based on examination of the following factors:

- Balance of use and protection of resources
- Extent of the environmental impacts

This alternative was chosen because it best resolves the major issues while providing for common ground among conflicting opinions as well as multiple uses of public lands in a sustainable fashion. In the opinion of BLM, it provides the best balance of resource protection and use.

ES.9 NEXT STEPS

The comment period on this Draft RMP/EIS will extend for 90 days following publication of the EPA's Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. After comments are received they will be evaluated. Substantive comments could lead to changes in one or more of the alternatives, or in the analysis of environmental consequences. A Proposed RMP and Final Environmental Impact Statement will then be completed and released. If protests are received on the Proposed RMP/FEIS, they will be reviewed and addressed by the Director of the BLM before a Record of Decision and Approved Plan is released.

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